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WHEN

JACK COMES LATE

A COMEDY-MONOLOGUE FOR A LADY

By HELEN CORINNE BERGEN

PRICE, 15 CENTS.

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WHEN JACK COMES LATE.

A Comedy-monologue for a Young Lady.

By Helen Corinne Bergen.

Scene.—A parlor. Young lady reading book; a banjo near at hand.
Stage-Business.—Young lady frequently takes watch from her breast; puts it to her ear to see if it is going. Turns pages of book jerkily; looks toward supposed window at the left. Drops book. Picks it up, bottom side up, and affects to read very diligently. Throws book aside finally and rises.

OH, that tiresome old book! I wonder where Jack can be?
I've raised the blinds about a dozen times to see
If he were coming yet. [*Listens.*] No step is near.
He said he would come early! Ah, alas! I fear
He may prove false! [*With great fear in voice and expression.*]
But no, [*brightening, tossing head, and laughing gaily*]
that cannot be,
For I have learned that Jack is constancy
Itself. But—yet—the girls all say he loved Kate first.
[*Takes watch from bosom, places to ear and listens attentively.*]
This horrid little watch ticks as if it would burst!
It wants to let me know the minutes fly,
And still no step is near! Oh, I—I—I—.
[*There is excellent opportunity for expressive intonation at those three "I's."*]
Yes, Jack is false; I feel, I know 'tis so;
Well, if he wants to, let him, let him go!
Why should I care? There's Dick and Harold—two— [*counts on fingers, her doleful expression gradually breaking into a smile*]

'Bout fifty others who would—well—would do!
But still, I must confess, there's none like Jack.
Well, I can try and win his false heart back.
[*Starts with sudden conviction.*]
When woman loves, what will not woman do?
Could I, indeed, stoop to regain him if he proves untrue?
Not I! Oh, I'll brace up and flirt and be as gay—[*Saying this she sinks into a chair, covers eyes with handkerchief and sobs violently. Repeat the word "gay" in a long-drawn-out sob, then dry eyes coquettishly and rise.*]
Oh, it makes me so angry to act this silly way!
[*Dramatically.*]
Why should I care if he *never* comes again?
[*With sudden, overwhelming conviction.*]
But I *do* care and [*putting hand on heart*] that's what makes the pain.
Love is another word for sorrow, anyway. Black
Is the signal color one should wear. Oh, Jack!
Who'd ever dream that you could be untrue—
[*Meditatively.*] He said that he'd come early—[*angrily*] oh, he'll rue
This! [*Turns toward right; hears her mother call without.*] What's that mamma? Trouble enough, I vow,
Jack said he would come early, and [*looking at watch*] it's 8.30 now!
What's that? You've been through all this waiting in your younger day?
Well, mamma, now, honest, isn't it enough to make one's hair turn gray?
Yes, I'll play and sing! 'twill pass the time away.
Come, you old banjo—my truest love, I ween;
[*Seizes banjo impulsively, sits down and begins to tune it, soliloquizing.*]
Dick used to say—dear Dick! I treated him [*very tenderly*] *awfully* mean!—

He loved to hear me sing. Wish I had him back!
He was three times as devoted as that horrid Jack!
Oh, well, it won't take me long to forget Jack; I hate

[*At this juncture, she places the head of the banjo on the floor, seizes the neck firmly and screws the keys viciously, on the word "hate," unconsciously breaking a string.*]

Him already; but [*tenderly and reminiscently*] would have loved him had he come at eight.

[*Sighs and lifts banjo to her lap; beholds broken string, thrusts instrument from her petulantly.*]

Oh, that tiresome banjo! the old string breaks, of course;
Suppose if I try to sing my voice would sound hoarse,
Like tears! I am ashamed to care so much, and yet—
When one has planned to marry one can't forget!
Heigho! I presume I'll say like the girl in the song does, soon—
You all know what she says, "I'll marry my man in the [*laughs*] moon!"

[*Sings first verse and chorus of the song.*]

Oh, I would not forgive Jack now if he came and said
He could not get here because his rich aunt was dead!
I would not speak to him, or smile, or say one thing;
I'd stare at him like this [*stares*] and take his old ring,
And throw it at him, and his letters, too!
Oh, I know, yes, indeed, I know what I'll do!
Thank Heaven, we have in the house a telephone;
I'll call Jack up—yes, and I'll make him own
He's false! Or, better still, perhaps he'll say
He was detained, but will be over right away!

[*Starts to run off, hesitates, comes back.*]

No, I'll not risk it! It isn't safe, I declare,
For I would find, of course, that Jack wasn't there!
I despise a telephone! It's such an aggravating thing to own,
Bad as the postman, who, every single day
That one is looking for a letter, goes the other way!

Ah, postmen and telephones and Jack are false!
To-morrow night at the hop [*spreading out arms and waltzing a few steps*] I'll waltz and waltz!
I'll make him miserable! I scorn him! No, I'll not forgive!
I mean it this time, mamma, true as you live.
Forgive? Not if on bended knee in peaceful quest,
He offered up a box of Huyler's best!

[*After "I scorn him," pause as if interrupted from without, look to right, and then apparently reply, "No, I'll not forgive," etc. In the line "He offered up," etc., substitute the name of the most popular candy-dealer in your vicinity.*]

I never really loved him, anyway!
Mamma, how can you laugh? I would not say
A word, no matter how he begged or prayed;
Nor how plausible (they are always plausible) the excuses made!
I'll forswear love, become a suffragist;
Go out to Kansas; run for the Senate if the Populists insist!
Mary Ellen Lease won't be in it. Simpson, Peffer, and the rest
May hang their harps on the weeping willow, when I start West!
How I could dream of such a common thing as marriage, I can't tell.
The slaves and I are free!—What's that, the bell?
[*Tiptoes to left, listening.*]
His step—his voice—I knew he'd come! [*Addressing mother, at right*] How absurd
Of you, mamma! Said I would not say a word?
[*Laughing gaily.*]
I meant a cross word; I take all back.
Ah! [*looking at watch*] he isn't *very* late. [*Softly, ecstatically.*] Hello, Jack!

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Washington Post.—"A realistic bit of humor and pathos crystallized into verse."

Washington Chronicle.—"'All the world loves a lover,' and for this reason all the world appreciates the realistic humor and pathos of that feminine heart that runs the gamut of hope, fear, uncertainty, anger, and final joy 'When Jack Comes Late.'"

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